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GUS HALL

Marxism and Negro Liberation

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Marxism *and* Negro Liberation

by GUS HALL

NEW YORK
NEW CENTURY PUBLISHERS

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

GUS HALL, the author of this pamphlet, is the National Secretary of the Communist Party. Formerly a steelworker, he helped to organize the C.I.O. Steelworkers Union in the 1930's.

He is one of the eleven Communist leaders convicted in the notorious Foley Square "thought control" trial aimed to muzzle opponents of the Truman-Wall Street war drive. He is presently free on bail while the conviction is under appeal before the U.S. Supreme Court. He is an outstanding working-class champion of the peace, freedom and security of the people. As one of the foremost leaders of the Communist Party, he has made many outstanding contributions in the application of the science of Marxism-Leninism to American conditions.

A Navy veteran of the last war, he is also the author of *Peace Can Be Won!*, *Hands Off Korea and Formosa*, and *Which Way for Young Americans.*

This pamphlet contains the text of his address at a meeting in celebration of Negro History Week, held in New York, in February, under the auspices of the Communist Party.

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MARXISM *and* NEGRO LIBERATION

THE HISTORY of the Negro people is a great history of a great people. Above all it is a history of struggle, bloodshed, heroism and sacrifice. It is a history of tremendous obstacles overcome, of struggle against heavy odds. It is the history of generations that struggled against their enslavement by the white rulers of the United States.

These struggles have left a proud and glorious legacy, inherited by each succeeding generation as a guide in its own struggles which carry forward the struggles of the past. Because of the struggles and activities of the Negro people, the U.S.A. is in every way better off. They have added much in every field to the achievements of the people of the United States.

The lessons to be drawn from the history of the Negro people are many and varied not only for the Negro people but for all the oppressed and exploited. What are some of the lessons and outstanding characteristics of the struggles of the Negro people that stand out even to a casual observer of Negro history?

Militancy and skill in the struggle against great odds. The great odds arise from the fact that the Negroes were pirated from Africa—the land of their historic nativity, brought to a new, strange land in chains. From African countries and tribes having various languages, distinctive cultures and dissimilar levels of economic and political development, they were transported like cattle, seized and impressed into bondage, first by their slave-master colonial ruling class and subsequently by the U.S. slave-master nation. In later years, these odds arise from the fact that the growing Negro nation remains under the domination of the

247

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most ruthless and the most powerful capitalist country in the world.

At each turn of history the Negro people have merged their struggles with the cause of social progress. In 1776 it was the fight for independence. In 1861-65, it was the struggle for the abolition of chattel slavery; in 1941, the struggle against fascism.

At each turn of events, the Negro people have joined forces and united with the class or groups fighting for progress. In the early period it was with the capitalist class and the farmers, the artisans and working men. In the present period, the trend is to unite with the working class, the class now leading the march toward the next stage of progress.

One of the most important lessons for the working class is the historically affirmed fact that there can be no major social advance in the United States as long as the masses accept, defend or are passive and neutral toward the oppression and subjugation of the Negro people. The attitude of the working class to the Negro people is, and will be, a yardstick by which to measure all progress against capitalism and reaction. The working class will finally understand this truism when it realizes that the absence of such understanding has hampered its struggles in the past. The oppression of the Negro people, a devastating indictment against U.S. capitalism in itself, likewise has been and remains a major weapon in the hands of the capitalist class in exploiting and oppressing the working class and farm masses.

Finally, the masses must learn to see the importance of the fact that the Negro people have always fought against the ruling class, the common enemy of all the common people of the United States of America.

INTEGRATION IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT EQUALITY

In their own way, for their own ends, the ruling class and its apologists also take note of Negro History Week. They use the

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week in an attempt to camouflage the evil evidence of their unrelenting subjugation, oppression and discrimination against the Negro people. They conjure up mirages of the great progress they have made toward "conferring equal rights on Negroes." But, in fact, they opened Negro History Week by taking the lives of seven innocent men in Martinsville. The New York police coldbloodedly shot the Negro G.I. Derrick, but Jim Crow's apologists say, "we are now in a transition from a segregated to an integrated society." The Trenton Six sit in the death house, but the defenders of the slave market say, "the tide of integration is sweeping in."

They arrest, handcuff and conspire to imprison the greatest scholar U.S. capitalist society has produced in the last half century, the distinguished Negro author and now outstanding advocate of peace—Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois.

To speak of integration without equality, without freedom, is dangerous demagogy. Without equality and freedom, integration is an impossibility. Even the slavemaster spoke about the one big "family" made up of the slaves and their masters.

Words about integration are meaningless when the average income of a white rural family in the U.S.A. is $1,600, while the average income of a Negro rural family is $559.

All the punitive powers of the government enforce the "Nuremberg Laws" of Dixie, which proscribe the status of the Negro nation in our country as a disfranchised, segregated, pariah caste—unrepresented in government and unspoken for in the law courts of the land!

Such phrases about "the progressive integration of Negroes in the total life of the United States" are meaningless when the Negro people comprise 9.8 percent of the population, but receive less than three percent of the national income. These figures give only a general idea. The conditions of the Negro workers and sharecroppers are much worse than the picture they convey.

The masses of Negro people are not tied to the land with chains as were the chattel slaves. Instead they are tied to the land as

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sharecroppers with the chains of poverty, debts, mortgages. The sharecropper cultivates the land with a plow and a mule. He gets "one-tenth of a crop from a half of a farm." This relationship to the land is the economic heart of the slave conditions of the Negro masses in the South. After the Civil War the land in large part stayed in the hands of the old landlords. In cases where the land was taken away by the freed slaves, it was given back to the former owner. The freed slaves were free, but had no land on which to make a livelihood. So they were forced into the system of sharecropping and peonage.

The word "progress" sounds somewhat hollow when, as late as 1940, it is officially reported that 70 percent of Negro homes in the South are without running water; 70 percent without electricity; 27 percent had no water supply at all. In Baltimore, the fact that 20 percent of the population are Negro and occupy only two percent of the living space, is a cold fact, but to the Negro people it means cold flats. In Chicago, in ghetto houses formerly built for 1,127 families, 3,580 families and 646 single people are forced to live.

How can one speak of integration when in Mississippi they spend annually $71 for each white child attending school, and $11.96 for each Negro child attending a Jim-Crow school. In Louisiana they spend $121.32 for each white child and $46.25 for each Negro child.

The Negro teacher in the South earns today a mere $10 to $15 more a month than she did 70 years ago. She knows that in Mississippi the wage of a white teacher is $1,107 per year while a Negro teacher gets $342 per year. It is not easy for her to teach that "progress has been made."

The breaking of Jim-Crow laws in some of the industries is an important step forward. But when you take into consideration that today 64 percent of the Negro workers are in the unskilled categories, it becomes clear this is only a first step.

Eighty-seven years after the freeing of the slaves, it is dangerous

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for the Negro citizen to vote. Masses of Negro citizens, the great majority, are kept from voting by the poll tax, by state laws and by the fear of being shot, as has happened to so many.

In modern times national oppression is a *hallmark* of capitalism. Whereas equality of nations is inherent in the very system of Socialism. We must do much more to bring this basic truth to the masses. The best way to do this is to show concretely how oppressed nations fare under capitalism, and what has happened to the formerly oppressed nations now under Socialism.

SOCIALISM FREES OPPRESSED NATIONS

As an example, let us take a small nation of 6½ million "colored" people—Uzbekistan, whose population corresponds to that of the unfree Negro nation in the Black Belt. Also, as in the Black Belt of the South, the principal Uzbek crop is cotton.

This former colonial holding of Czarist Russia, annexed in the middle of the 19th century, remained a feudal, super-exploited colonial area whose people were ground down in poverty and subjected to all manner of national oppression by the ruling class of the "lordly Great Russians."

The Great October Revolution liberated the working people of Uzbekistan and set the nation on the road to its free development. With the active support and assistance of the working class of Russia (the former oppressor nation), the Uzbek people, under the leadership of the small Uzbek working class and inspired by the Stalinist policies of the Communist Party, achieved a great blossoming of their national life. On the 27th of October, 1924, the *Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic* was formed and entered the community of free and equal nations that is the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Before the October Revolution this predominantly agricultural people owned only a fraction of their land. They worked it without benefit of modern technique. Their farm implements were the

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crude wooden plow, hoe and harrow. Their abundant natural resources (coal, oil, copper, sulphur, limestone) were either possessed by imperialist exploiters, or remained fallow and undeveloped. Foreign capital and local leeches controlled the sources of water supply. Rural life was characterized by the degradation of the plantation system of sharecropper serfdom. Village and city life withered and declined for lack of industrial development.

The whole of Uzbekistan's industry was confined to a few primitive cotton gins and manufacture of a small quantity of silk and cotton goods.

Now, only 26 years after its national birth and its political organization as an independent, free and equal constituent Republic of the U.S.S.R., Uzbekistan boasts a heavy industry, power industry, a network of textile mills and silk factories, electrochemical fertilizer plants, iron and steel works, engineering and machine tool plants, All told, from 1924 to 1949, some 937 new, large-scale industrial enterprises were constructed in Uzbekistan. Compared with 1924, the output of Uzbek industries increased 28-fold. The people of that former slave nation are now the proud owners of this great industry.

In place of the near-slavery plantation forms of agricultural production, which engaged the toil of millions in the production of cotton for foreign and domestic landlords, there has arisen a vast network of collective and state farms where the free farmfolk own the land in common and work for themselves and each other in dignity and with an ever-soaring standard of living.

In 1939, no less than 91 percent of all collective farms were tilled by tractors. Many thousands of cotton pickers, flame weeders and other modern agricultural machines help to plant and pick the cotton. Even before the war, the yield per acre of Uzbekistan cotton was six times that of the United States. In 1938, the total cotton harvest was 1½ million tons, compared with one-half million tons before the October Revolution.

Though its cotton production has developed over three-fold in yield, Uzbekistan is no one-crop agricultural economy. The

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cotton crop is supplemented by diversified agricultural production. The Republic grows approximately half of the rice of the U.S.S.R. Its orchards and vinyards are the envy of the world's fruit growers and hold first place in the Soviet Union. Dairying and cattle-breeding are huge new rural industries in the Republic.

In pre-revolutionary Uzbekistan, literate people comprised only two percent of the population. In spite of this fact it had contributed to civilization one of the world's greatest poets and humanists—Alisher Navoi, as well as one of the greatest astronomers, and a number of other important cultural and public figures. But now illiteracy has been entirely eliminated. In 1915, 17,000 school children—only four for each thousand of the population—attended the 160 schools of that country. Today 40,000 teachers instruct 1,250,000 pupils in some 5,000 schools. Before the Revolution there was not a single college in Uzbekistan. Now there are 39 colleges and 90 technical schools, which in the past 25 years have turned out 20,000 engineers, teachers, physicians, agronomists, economists and other specialists with university degrees.

CULTURES BLOSSOM UNDER SOCIALISM

Much has been done to increase popular educational and recreational facilities. There are 29 theaters producing works in drama, opera, and ballet, whereas before the Revolution there were none. There are also 700 movie theaters which exhibit the best films of Soviet production as well as the excellent films of Uzbekistan's own national studios.

The State Library of Uzbekistan has two million volumes. In addition there are 133 regional libraries, 49 municipal libraries and 204 rural libraries which make readily accessible the great literary works of the Uzbek writers and the writers of the world's best literature. Twenty thousand titles in 60,000,000 volumes of Marxist-Leninist classics have been purchased by the readers of Uzbekistan.

Today, in this Republic, just 25 years old, there are published

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some 96 daily newspapers in addition to the national editions of such papers as *Pravda* and *Izvestia*. All told 225 newspapers are published in the Republic.

Over a hundred large sanatoria and rest homes had been built in Uzbekistan by 1939. There is an extensive system of hospitals and dispensaries which employed 2,500 doctors ten years ago. Special hospitals and maternity homes for women and children have been established.

Every person over 18 years of age has the right to vote in the election of all government officers as well as the management of industrial and agricultural enterprises. There is no trace of discrimination, segregation or the ideology of chauvinism because of national origin, sex or for any other reason. Uzbekistan is a happy, free, prospering Republic—a far cry from the old backward slave nations under the heel of Czarist Russia.

Such is the short 26-year history of a former oppressed nation under Socialism. Uzbekistan is not a lone exception. It is typical of the history of all formerly oppressed nations, freed and now flowering under a free system of Socialism. The nations under Socialism are moving toward integration by the only possible road—the road of equality, freedom and the right to determine their own course without pressure or coercion.

CAPITALISM OPPRESSES THE NEGRO NATION

It is difficult to make a comparison with oppressed peoples and nations who are the victims of capitalist oppression. When one thinks of the murder of the Martinsville Seven, the cases of Willie McGee, Mrs. Rosa Lee Ingram, the Trenton Six, it is difficult even to speak of progress. The only thing one can really compare is the heroism, the militancy of the oppressed peoples.

It is 87 years since the Emancipation Proclamation heralded the freedom of the slaves in the U.S.A. The road for the Negro people has been a difficult one. It is paved with lynchings, slayings, sacrifices, and also with heroic struggle against great odds.

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Yes, in spite of great odds, one can speak of some progress.

The breaking of the bonds of chattel slavery was a big step forward.

Breaking through the Jim-Crow laws in some industries is an important advance.

The magnificent defiant triumphs of a few individual Negroes in almost every field of art, culture, science and sport activities in the face of heartbreaking difficulties—the great Paul Robeson, Dr. W E. B. Du Bois, D. A. Julian, Langston Hughes, etc.

The advances in breaking down some of the practices of segregation and discrimination, especially in the North, are important victories.

Yes, there is also a victory in the negative sense.

Without continuous struggle the conditions of the Negro people would undoubtedly have been pushed back to where they were in the period of slavery. This has been, and is, the aim and outlook of the ruling class of the U.S.A.

These are important victories. But it is difficult to speak about victory and progress when the dominant fact that stares us in the face is the continuation of a system of frame-up and lynching, when legal lynching in the electric chair is on the increase, when there is discrimination, segregation in every walk of life, in every corner of the land.

Progress in the march to freedom and equality for the Negro people has been slow and spotty. They have inched forward against the most brutal, barbaric violence of the capitalist class. Their gains have been won at the expense of bloodshed and lives.

Because Socialism pursues a fixed policy of national freedom and equality, Uzbekistan, with the help of the Soviet government and the peoples of the other Republics, has progressed and made up for the lost years suffered under Czarist oppression.

Because it is the fixed policy of capitalism to oppress and enslave nations and peoples, the Negro nation in the South, and the Negro people as a whole, still suffer the hardships and handicaps resulting from national subjugation and oppression.

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Like class exploitation and oppression, national subjugation is inherent in capitalism.

Like the elimination of exploitation of one class by another, national equality and freedom are inseparable from Socialism and Communism.

MARXISM AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION

I have very carefully studied the Marxist publications issued on Negro History Week. These include discussion outlines, guides for speakers, background material, articles, the special edition of *The Worker* and reports of speeches by Communist leaders. All of this material has one very basic and rather startling omission. That is, nobody speaks about the contribution or influence of Marxism on the course of the struggle and history of the Negro people and their movement for liberation.

It is not enough for us to speak about the contributions of individuals to the struggle for Negro rights. We must show how *Marxist thinking and actions* are reflected in the development of the Negro question in the United States. The undeniable fact is that Marxism has been and is having not only an indirect but also a very direct and decisive influence on the course of the Negro people's history and the struggles for Negro rights. To get a full picture, one must take this decisive influence into account.

What is this influence?

Marxian understanding of the national question is a historic development of great importance. This is a very specific influence of the teachings of Lenin and Stalin on our life. This understanding is not limited to the Communist Party, but in one form or another influences the thinking of millions, both Negro and white.

One of the best ways to dramatize the influence of this basic concept is to compare present-day understanding with that of the most advanced sections of the American people before this basic thought of Lenin and Stalin reached the shores of the United States.

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What was the approach of the early Socialist movement and the advanced sections of the working class in the U.S. prior to World War I on the nature of the Negro question, the character of the oppression of the Negro people? Their position was largely based on a sentimental humanitarianism, an approach of "uplifters," which itself smelled of chauvinism. It was common for these people with this approach to duck the responsibilities of the working class by saying that the white workers are not the cause of Negro oppression. Others justified the failure of the working class to struggle for Negro rights by saying, "The Negro people must fight first," thereby discounting and ignoring the epic struggles of the Negro people throughout their history, and again dodging the responsibility of the working class. There was also much talk in those days that "Socialism would fix everything," thereby again evading the responsibility for fighting against discrimination and oppression *daily and hourly*, as long as capitalism prevails.

All these pre-Marxist thoughts were in reality tainted with white chauvinism. The practical proposals put forward to improve the conditions of the Negro people were such as not to disturb the slave market set-up in the United States. There was no concept that here was a question of *national* oppression, and therefore there were no ideas of the need to struggle for full economic, political and social equality, or for the right of national self-determination. The Negro question was generally considered a "race question." And, let us remember, I am speaking here about the most advanced sections of the American people of that period.

MARXISM—A WORKING-CLASS SCIENCE

What are some of the central thoughts on which the Marxist understanding of the national question is based?

Marxism is an advanced social science, a partisan working-class science that fights against all the evils flowing from capitalist

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society. It is a science directed against all forms of exploitation and oppression.

In its mad drive for profits the capitalist class finds it necessary not only to exploit the working class, but profitable to exploit oppressed peoples and nations. In other words, like class oppression, national subjugation arises from the very nature of an avaricious and expanding capitalism. Tribal chiefs, besides dominating their own tribes, went out to conquer new tribes. Kings, besides sitting on the backs of their own people, went out to conquer kingdoms. But the capitalist class, besides exploiting its own working class, wages war to conquer and subjugate whole peoples and nations. It is in this sense that one must understand the outstanding present world phenomenon of Wall Street monopoly's threat to the independence of every nation and people on earth.

From this basic Marxist recognition of capitalism's exploitation and oppression of nations flows the second fundamental thought: National oppression of other peoples not only results in extra profits for the capitalists, but it is at the same time an instrument for increased exploitation of the working class at home. National oppression makes it possible to apply the policy of divide and rule, to pit one people against another, in order to exploit both the more.

National oppression and class exploitation are, therefore, closely tied together. They both arise from the same source, the drive of the capitalist class for higher profits, through the ever intensifying exploitation and subjugation of all classes and peoples.

Therefore, the working class must understand that if it wants to be victorious in its struggle against capitalism, it must not only sympathize with, but lead the struggle against, the national oppression of the Negro people. The working class must understand that the enemy of both is one and the same. It cannot win by fighting against the foe on one front, while supporting it on the other. And this it does when it fails to fight against national

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oppression. It is in this sense that one must understand the great truth of the words of Karl Marx: "Labor in the white skin can never be free so long as labor in the black skin is branded."

From the above flows the third basic thought. Just as capitalism needs an ideological cover to hide class exploitation, so it needs an ideological cover for its oppression of other nations. This ideology is generally built around what we call "imperialist chauvinism," the reactionary idea that the huge and wealthy industrial powers are destined to rule the world. With the advance of United States imperialism to the position of top world enslaver, this ideology has made dangerous headway among some sections of the American people who have fallen victim to the war-breeding idea that the United States is superior to all other nations. But in addition, the ruling class in our country has from the beginning perpetuated the racist ideology of white chauvinism, the myth that whites are superior to all colored peoples. This has been its chief weapon to justify the inhuman oppression and subjugation of the Negro people.

It is only when the working class and people see the purpose and the class nature of the ideology of white chauvinism that this poisonous ideology can be eliminated from the thinking and practices of the masses.

From all this flows the fourth Marxian thought: that we are against all class and national oppression and stand for the full equality and independence of all nations. We are for the right of all nations to determine their own course, their own way of life. It is this that gives the spirit and content to international working-class solidarity.

MARXISM SPURS NEGRO LIBERATION STRUGGLE

What are some of the more concrete ways in which Marxist ideas have influenced the struggle against the oppression of the Negro people?

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First, it is clear that there are many who would vehemently deny that they have been influenced by Marxism but who, nevertheless, accept many of the conclusions that flow from this thinking.

To the extent that the idea of the Negro question as but a "race question" is being replaced by the concept that the root of the Negro question is the oppression and subjugation of a nation in the Black Belt, and therefore a national question, to that extent do we see the influence of Marxism. And who can deny that there is progress in this direction!

Second, the role of the trade unions in the struggle for Negro rights is due to the influence of Marxism. The fact that the leadership of the C.I.O. has slipped back on this question, or the fact that there are still serious shortcomings in the understanding of this problem among the workers, should not keep us from recognizing that some headway has been made. Even the growth of the Negro membership in the trade unions is partial proof of this. In 1930, there were 110,000 Negro trade union members. In 1940, there were 600,000. In 1945, there were 1,250,000. This has greatly increased since 1945.

The best example of this Marxist thinking in the trade unions was the official position of the C.I.O. for many years in their organization jointly of Negro and white workers. This left its mark on the membership and encouraged the active participation of Negro workers in such unions as auto, steel and mining. I think it would be correct to say that this influence would have been even greater and more lasting if it had not been for the influence of Browder's reformist and opportunist policies on our work in the formative years of the C.I.O.

Third, who can deny that it is partially because of the influence of Marxism that the Negro people today see more clearly than ever the road ahead? In ever greater numbers the Negro people are beginning to know where they are going and how to get there. The new level of the struggle of the Negro people is evidence of this fact. The growing extent to which the Negro people see their

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own struggle in relationship to, and in unity with, the world-wide colonial struggle is further evidence of this influence.

Fourth, the extent to which the idea of unity of the working class and the Negro people in a fighting alliance for progress is penetrating among the workers is a further index of the influence of Marxism. The developing understanding of the absolute indispensability of this unity can be directly attributed to our work.

Fifth, it is also due to the influence of our ideas that there is a growing understanding that white chauvinism is an enemy ideology designed to justify the national oppression of the Negro people.

Sixth, the very existence of our Party, and especially the outstanding role of our Negro comrades—of Henry Winston, Benjamin J. Davis, Pettis Perry, Claudia Jones, James Jackson, Claude Lightfoot, Ed Strong and scores of others—is a powerful influence on the course of the struggle for Negro liberation. The new book by William Z. Foster, *Outline Political History of the Americas,* not only records the influence of Marxism in this connection, but is in itself a further contribution to the understanding of this question.

Finally, I think it is correct to say that the growing appreciation of the need to study the history of the Negro people, including the celebration of Negro History Week, reflects the influence of Marxist thinking within our country.

Here it is not a question of boasting, or patting ourselves on the back. But, one cannot get an objective picture of the history of the struggle for Negro freedom without seeing the influence of Marxism, the influence of our Communist Party.

Now I want to spend a few minutes on some specific questions that have come up for discussion repeatedly, questions on which there is some fuzziness and unclarity.

The first of these is: what is the Negro nation we speak about? There are some who say that all the 15 million Negro people in the U.S.A. comprise the oppressed nation. This, of course, is not

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so. We are speaking about the subjugated Negro nation (where some six million Negroes are a majority in an area inhabited also by four to five million whites) in the Black Belt area of the South. Here the young, growing Negro nation has all the characteristics of nationhood and is kept in subjection by the Wall Street-Bourbon capitalists and landowners.

When one states this, the question immediately arises, what about the millions of Negro people who live in the North and other parts of the country? The Negro people outside of the area of the Negro nation constitute a national minority.

In this connection there are a number of questions that need further elucidation. First, what are the possible dangers and wrong conclusions that can be drawn from the formulation that the 15 million Negroes comprise a nation?

THE NEGRO NATION

Indirectly such a formulation rejects or leaves out of consideration among the basic prerequisites of a nation, as set down by Stalin, those of a common territory and a common economic life. Furthermore, it opens the door to the very dangerous idea that Negroes as individuals, as groups and as a national minority cannot be integrated into the United States nation, and that the U.S. nation is to be limited to whites only.

It does not see the Negro worker as an integral part of the working class in the country as a whole.

It leaves room for confusion as to the tasks, outlook, program of the *Negro nation in the South* and its struggle for self-determination, and the *struggle for full equality of the Negro people* in the rest of the country. As a rule, this confusion results in a watering down of the program and tasks of the national liberation struggle, an ignoring of the particular and distinctive features, of the unequal levels and forms of struggle, demanded by the requirements of the "equal rights" goals of the national minority and the "liberation" goals of the Black Belt nation.

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Secondly, is there a close connection, an interrelation between the subjugated nation in the South and the Negro people generally? How could anyone deny this? Of course there is. There is in fact a very close kinship. Each influences the other. The status of the subject nation in the Black Belt determines the whole Jim-Crow pattern of discrimination and segregation of the Negro people in the rest of the country. And similarly, the struggle for Negro rights in any part of the country heightens the struggle in others. Thus, the struggles for full equality of the Negro national minority and the struggle for national liberation of the oppressed nation are very closely interlinked.

A third important question that has come up for considerable discussion is the role of the Negro bourgeoisie. On this question there seem to be tendencies to err in two directions. There are some who tend to see the Negro people as one homogeneous classless whole. This, of course, is wrong and can lead to wrong conclusions both in practical work and in theoretical thinking. For example, it is difficult to fight against the influence of bourgeois nationalism unless you see the class role of the Negro bourgeoisie. And, on the other hand, it is impossible to evaluate fully the role of the working class if we do not see the class divisions. Often the argument is made that the Negro bourgeoisie is small and feeble; it is not in the decisive industries, and, therefore, it is really not a bourgeoisie at all.

The other error is in the direction of seeing the Negro bourgeoisie, but tending to exaggerate its size and its role. This is expressed in an attempt to equate the Negro bourgeoisie with that of the capitalist class in the United States, and to say that there is no difference between it and the bourgeoisie in Wall Street. Such a position, of course, tends to deny the national character of the subjugation and oppression of the Negro people and is at variance with the Marxist position on the role of the bourgeoisie of an oppressed nation at certain periods in the history of the struggle for liberation, and the role of the bourgeoisie of the oppressing nation.

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We must not exaggerate in either direction. It is true that the Negro bourgeoisie is, relatively speaking, small. But nevertheless it does play an important role. There are 12 banks operated by Negro bankers, 11 of these operating and having their main base in the South. The assets of these banks are approximately 15 million dollars. There are approximately 46 Negro insurance companies with total assets of 60 million dollars. There are others, but these are the two central groupings of the Negro bourgeoisie.

We, of course, must see the importance and decisive role of the working class in the national liberation struggle. While there have been some very definite advances we must say that the struggle of the Negro nation for liberation has not yet reached the stage where the working class plays the decisive and leading role.

We must struggle against the influence of the Negro bourgeoisie among the people, against their taking over the leadership of the struggle. For the Negro bourgeoisie cannot play *the* leading role under conditions of today, because its very class position leads it to compromise, to sell the movement short for minor reforms, concessions to individuals, etc.

NATIONAL CHARACTER OF NEGRO OPPRESSION

While recognizing all this we must at the same time see the national character of the oppression of the Negro people, the fact that the Negro bourgeoisie is itself in an oppressed position and suffers the consequences of subjugation, discrimination and segregation. From this we must draw the proper conclusions as to the role of the bourgeoisie in the struggle for liberation, but at the same time see its limitations and the dangers arising out of its taking the leadership in the struggle. To the extent that the Negro workers assume leadership of the Negro people's movement, to that extent can it push sections of the bourgeoisie to take a more consistent position on behalf of Negro liberation.

A fourth question on which there are some loose ends is related

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to problems of a number of minority groups. In working among these groups there is a tendency to equate their problems, issues and program, with those of the Negro nation and people. This, of course, is wrong.

However, even from this incorrect method of raising the question we must first try to extract that which is positive. Here we must note a justified criticism of our Party, the working class and the progressive movement generally. The fact is that we have not done enough in the struggle against anti-Semitism; we have been slow in recognizing the problems of the Mexican-American national minority, arising from specific forms of oppression and discrimination; and we have not done nearly enough about the special problems of the Puerto Rican people in the United States. Thus, our comrades among these national groups are motivated by the ideas of unity of all oppressed peoples.

However, the problems, program and issues facing the subjugated Negro nation cannot be equated with those of national minorities and national groups in our country. Such equation arises from, and in most cases results in, failure to recognize the fact that there is a subjugated nation in the South, and that the working class of the United States has very special responsibilities in fighting for its freedom. Furthermore, it is even incorrect to equate the problems of the Negro national minority in the North with those of the other minority groups, because of the special conditions and problems arising from the relationship of this national minority to the subjugated nation in the South.

Let me speak a little more concretely of this error in the work among the Jewish masses. Very often the struggle for equal rights for the Negro people is connected with the slogan "For Unity of the Negro and Jewish Peoples." In the United States we cannot have the view that the people are one whole. Among the Jewish people sharp class divisions exist. While we must expunge every trace of anti-Semitism from the national life of our country, and while, to some measure, anti-Semitism is experienced by Jews

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of all classes, one cannot speak of the oppression of the Jewish people, as a people, in the sense that we speak of the oppressed Negro people. It is the Jewish workers, the professionals and middle-class strata with whom we are concerned, and who must be won for the struggle against fascism and war.

Does our work in the Jewish field need some special approaches different, for example, from our work among the Finnish people or other national groups? Undoubtedly it does. This arises from the relationship to the special conditions of the Jewish masses in other parts of the world, and from the existence of anti-Semitism in the United States. But we must not allow these considerations to draw us into the camp of the bourgeois nationalists.

Further, the question of the struggle against white chauvinism is very often raised among the Jewish masses by stating that there is a kinship between the Jews and Negroes because of the existence of anti-Semitism. In other words, the main thought left in the minds of the people is that they must fight white chauvinism because there is anti-Semitism. Can we burn out white chauvinism on this level? I do not think so. Why? While such a placing of the question might be an opening to reach the Jewish masses, and gives rise to humanitarian sentiments, it does not explain the class roots of white chauvinism, and the special role of the white masses to lead the fight against white chauvinism, to root it out within their ranks.

National groups and minorities do feel the effects of discrimination in one form or another. This can be a basis for convincing them of the need for unity, that the enemy is the same, and therefore that it is necessary for them to support the struggle for the full equality and freedom of the Negro people. But we cannot win these masses for the struggle by leaving the question on this elementary level.

Comrade Foster has clearly stated that the Negro question has become an international issue. This is so for three reasons:

1. because there is the upsurge and new level of struggle on

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the part of the Negro people against national oppression and subjugation;

2. because Wall Street imperialism drives to enslave the world under the false cover of fighting for independence and democracy of peoples and nations.

3. because of the changing character of the world.

THE SOVIET UNION AND THE NEGRO NATION

With the birth of the Soviet Union there has come into being a system of society—Socialism—that is founded on the principle of the right of each nation freely to determine its own destiny, of the elimination of the exploitation of man by man and with it the oppression of nations. There came into being a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—a freely and voluntarily federated family of equal nations. From then on, the question of national liberation and independence of nations and peoples has taken on new meaning. Now the oppressed peoples and nations of the world have a champion, a defender and a living example. This is especially significant when one realizes that until this point in history, with the exception of noteworthy individual democrats, the Marxists, etc., there were no powerful, reliable and "disinterested" defenders of the oppressed nations and peoples. Even those who had given lip service to the issue became, when the chips were down, the supporters of the oppressors of nations and threw in their lot in defense of "the fatherland."

Now there are 800,000,000 people who live in countries with governments which subscribe to the great idea of equality of nations. Besides this there is the working class of France and Italy, and, of course, the peoples of the colonial world who subscribe to this fundamental thought of freedom. It is in this new world setting that one must see the new advances in the struggles of the Negro people and fully appreciate and see the possibilities in the period ahead.

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We must study the history of the Negro people in order further to improve our contribution to the unfolding of history in the future, so we can help remove the road blocks on the path to equality and freedom. We must further master the weapon of Marxism. We must make the great liberating ideas of the founders of our working class science—Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin—the property of the masses. We must continue to burn out the influences of the ideology of white chauvinism in the ranks of our Party, and we must extend this ideological struggle into the broad ranks of the working class.

Negro History Week must serve to raise to new levels not only the defense of the victims of oppression and subjugation, but also the struggle to expose the whole system of frame-up and lynching that arises out of the subjugation and oppression of the Negro nation and people.

The progress of the last 87 years has been slow because of the reactionary character of capitalism. Its tempo need not set, and will not set the speed of progress in years to come. Civilization has reached the point where it is going to make some giant strides forward. It is reaching a point where class oppression and exploitation, as well as national subjugation and oppression, will be memories, relics in the museums of an advancing world whose peoples live in peace and happiness under Socialism.

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